

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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-----112358Z 032726 /12

P 112305Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3436
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ENRG, SENV, CA
SUBJECT: REACTION TO BERGER REPORT: FOLLOW-UP

REF: OTTAWA 3732

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. AS MEDIA REPORTS ON THE CONTENT OF BERGER REPORT HAVE DIMINISHED, FOCUS HAS TURNED TO RE-ACTIONS AND TO GOC LEADERS' STATEMENTS. THESE FREQUENTLY HAVE REFLECTED SOBER SECOND THOUGHTS. PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU HAS REITERATED IN LONDON PRESS CONFERENCE THAT GOC SHOULD MAKE DECISION BEFORE U.S. DEADLINE. ENERGY MINISTER GILLESPIE INSISTED IN PARLIAMENT THAT CANADIAN INTERESTS WILL COME FIRST AS DECISION ON PIPELINE IS MADE BUT EMPHASIZED NEED TO AWAIT NEB REPORT BEFORE MAKING JUDGMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH DIMINISHED IN QUANTITY, NEWS REPORTS HAVE TENDED TO BE LENGTHY, FACTUAL AND REASONABLY ACCURATE ACCOUNTS OF VARIOUS PIPELINE ROUTES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE,
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AND OF SOCIAL COSTS OF A PIPELINE, POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL DISORDER IF CLAIMS ARE IGNORED, AND PROBLEMS THAT JUSTICE BERGER FACED AS HE PREPARED HIS REPORT.

3. AS RESULT, MORE SIGNIFICANT HAVE BEEN THE REACTIONS OF THE VARIOUS LEADERS, WHICH CONTINUE TO BE PRINTED. PM TRUDEAU IS REPORTED AS HAVING REFERRED TO THE PIPELINE

INQUIRY DURING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE IN LONDON AND TO HAVE
URGED "IF WE DON'T MAKE UP OUR MINDS THE AMERICANS WILL
GO AHEAD AND WE WILL NOT HAVE A PIPELINE . . . WE SHOULD
NOT LET OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS FOR US AND THAT IS WHY I AM
PUTTING ON VERY GREAT PRESSURE TO REACH A DECISION . . .
IF THE AMERICANS GO FOR EL PASO IT MIGHT BE LESS
EFFECTIVE AND MORE COSTLY FOR THEM AND IT MIGHT BE LESS
GOOD FOR CANADA".

4. WHEN ENERGY MINISTER ALASTAIR GILLESPIE WAS ASKED IN
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IF GOC WOULD PUT U.S. ENERGY NEEDS
AHEAD OF NATIVE CLAIMS, HE REPLIED, "... I THINK THAT IS
AN INSULTING QUESTION ... THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUEST-
ION IN OUR MINDS THAT THE CANADIAN INTEREST ... WOULD
COME WELL AHEAD OF ANY INTERESTS OF THE AMERICANS..." IN
REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HE ALSO SAID "... IT SEEMS TO
ME IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF, BEFORE MAKING JUDGMENTS AND
THINKING OUT POSITIONS WITH RESPECT TO PIPELINES, HONOR-
ABLE MEMBERS OPPOSITE WILL AWAIT THE REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD..." HE ALSO TURNED ASIDE A REQUEST
THAT THE ALCAN STUDY BE EXTENDED IN TIME.

5. THE GILLESPIE THEME WAS ECHOED IN CHARLES LYNCH 'S
SYNDICATED COLUMN WHICH HE HEADLINED "REAL DECISION COMES
FROM ENERGY BOARD". LYNCH POINTS OUT THAT THE WEIGHT OF
DECISION-MAKING FALLS UPON THE NEB AND FEDERAL CABINET --
ALTHOUGH HE POINTS OUT THAT "IF THE ENERGY BOARD RULES IN
FAVOR OF THE ARCTIC GAS PROPOSAL...THE CABINET CAN SAY YES
OR ... NO -- BUT IT CANNOT ORDER ANOTHER PROJECT TO
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PROCEED...THUS THE VITAL DECISION IS THE ONE TO BE TAKEN
BY THE ENERGY BOARD..."

6. ALL MAJOR PAPERS CONTINUE TO RUN EDITORIALS. MONTREAL
GAZETTE SAID "THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CANADIAN PEOPLE WILL
HAVE TO WEIGH MOST CAREFULLY THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE
GROUPS INVOLVED" WHILE THE TORONTO GLOBE CONCLUDED "ABOUT
PIPELINES, OTHERS MUST ALSO SPEAK. ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF
THE NORTH NOBODY, PERHAPS, HAS SPOKEN SO ARTICULATLY AS
MR BERGER..." IN SAME NEWSPAPER, COLUMNIST GEOFFREY
STEVENS ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO THE JUSTICE HIMSELF AND
ENTITLED HIS COLUMN "HE DESERVES ALL PRAISE". IT IS
STEVENS' VIEW THAT "THE BERGER INQUIRY HAS BEEN A VITAL
PHASE IN CANADA'S DEVELOPMENT. IRONICALLY, HOWEVER, HIS
REPORT WAS PROBABLY UNNECESSARY. BY THE TIME IT CAME
DOWN, THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY TRANSFERRING ITS
AFFECTION TO THE ALCAN ROUTE..." OTTAWA CITIZEN HEAD-
LINED ITS EDITORIAL, "MORALITY COSTS MONEY" AND CONCLUDES
"MORALITY AND NATIONAL SELF-INTEREST WILL LIKELY BE IN

CONFLICT ONCE ALL THE FACTS ARE IN". MONTREAL FRENCH-LANGUAGE LE DEVOIR SIMILARLY CONCLUDES "FOR CANADA THE BERGER REPORT RISKS BRINGING INTO PLAY EXPENSIVE CONSEQUENCES...COMPLICATIONS WILL EMERGE AT A TIME WHEN CANADA ABSOLUTELY MUST INCREASE ITS ENERGY RESOURCES".

7. FINALLY, NATIVE PEOPLES IN NORTH CONTINUE TO BE QUOTED WIDELY. "IT IS A REAL VICTORY FOR THE DENE" GEORGE ERASMUS, PRESIDENT OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIAN BROTHERHOOD, IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "THE JUDGE HAS RECOGNIZED THE DENE NATION". SPOKESMAN FOR THE COMMITTEE

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FOR ORIGINAL PEOPLES ENTITLEMENT (COPE) CALLED FOR MORE TIME TO SETTLE THEIR LAND CLAIMS, WHILE METI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT RICK HARDY SAID THE REPORT WAS "THE KISS OF DEATH" TO THE PIPELINE AND THE FUTURE OF THE MACKENZIE VALLEY WAS AT STAKE.

8. COMMENT: INTERESTINGLY, PC LEADER JOE CLARK HAS BEEN SILENT SINCE ISSUING HIS INITIAL STATEMENT ENDORSING BERGER'S FINDINGS (REFTEL). IT IS CLEAR NOT ALL PC MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY IN ALBERTA, SHARE HIS VIEWS. PC DEFECTOR AND NOW LIBERAL MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO JACK HORNER BLUNTLY TOLD ECON COUNSELOR THAT IF BERGER HAD

BEEN AROUND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, HIS ALBERTA CONSTITUENCY
WOULD STILL BE PRAIRIE GRASS AND BUFFALO. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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